

Airlift ‘*dream machines*’ will call Hickam home

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By the time the initial wave of C-17s begin flying out of Hickam in late 2005, it will have been 10 years since the Globemaster III achieved initial operational capability.”

During this time, America’s premier airlifter chalked up a steady stream of historic missions and “firsts,” even before officially achieving IOC in January 1995.

Currently, the C-17 holds 18 world-class aviation records, including payload to altitude time-to-climb, according to C-17 officials.

C-17s first participated in Operation Provide Promise, the international relief effort that kept the Bosnia-Herzegovina city of Sarajevo alive for three-and-a-half years. Between July 1992 and January 1996, Air Force C-130s, C-141s, and C-17s airlifted humanitarian assistance to the Bosnians in 4,197 sorties, delivering 622,800 tons of relief supplies.

In January 1996 Provide Promise ended, marking



Courtesy photo

Paratroopers await to go in a C-17. The C-17 achieved initial operational capability in January 1995.

the longest humanitarian airlift in history, surpassing the Berlin Airlift by more than three years.

The C-17’s first operational mission came during Operation Vigilant Warrior in October 1994. Two Globemaster IIIs departed Langley AFB, Va, flying nonstop to Dhahran AB, Saudi Arabia, with a load of vehicles, a rolling command post, and supplies for the Army’s 7th Transportation Division. Two refuelings

by KC-135s made the non-stop mission possible.

While participating in Exercise Centrazbat in September 1997, eight C-17s set a new distance record for an airdrop. The flight began in the U.S. and covered 7,897 nautical miles in 19 hours and 23 minutes, delivering Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and American paratroops to a drop zone in Kazakhstan. A tanker fleet of nine KC-10s and 11 KC-135s supported the airlifters along the way.

It’s not just the quantity of flight capability that’s so impressive, it is also the quality, according to Lt. Gen. Charles “Chuck” Wald, Air Force Air and Space Operations deputy chief of staff in 2002.

“This aircraft doesn’t compare to anything I’ve ever flown,” said General Wald, “I called Gen. John Handy, commander of U.S. Transportation Command and Air Mobility Command, while airborne and told him I’m switching from fighters to C-17s.

“It’s an unbelievable aircraft and flies like a dream,” he concluded.